

Appl. No. 10/027,024
Amdt. Dated April 30, 2004
Reply to Office Action of January 30, 2004

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of producing a printing plate in a printing machine, said method comprising

providing a thermal transfer film carrying a thermal transfer material in proximity to a surface of a printing plate carrier in a printing machine,

selectively ablating said thermal transfer material using a laser image-setting unit to selectively apply said thermal transfer material directly to the surface of said printing plate carrier, thereby forming a mask directly on said printing plate carrier in said printing machine, said mask defining image points and non-image points directly on said printing plate carrier by covering only one of either said image points or said non-image points on said carrier, and

using said mask produce a printing plate in said printing machine.

Claim 2 (previously presented): A method as in claim 1 wherein said mask is used to produce a gravure printing plate.

Claim 3 (previously presented): A method as in claim 2 wherein said mask is an etching mask which is applied to the surface of the printing plate carrier so that it covers said non-image points, said method further comprising etching gravure printing cells by applying acid where said thermal transfer material has not been applied to said surface of said carrier.

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Claim 4 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 3 wherein said thermal transfer material is selectively applied to a variable area of said surface with a constant thickness during ablation of said transfer material using said laser image setting unit.

Claim 5 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 1 wherein said mask is used to produce a flexographic printing plate.

Claim 6 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 5 wherein said printing plate carrier comprises a light sensitive coating which forms said surface, said mask being a copying mask which is applied to the surface of said carrier, said method comprising selectively exposing said light-sensitive coating through said mask by means of a copying lamp.

Claim 7 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 6 wherein said copying mask is a positive copying mask, said copying mask covering said image points.

Claim 8 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 6 wherein said mask is a negative copying mask, said copying mask covering said non-image points.

Claim 9 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 1 wherein said printing plate is a screen-printing screen.

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Claim 10 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 9 wherein said mask is a copying mask.

Claim 11 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 10 wherein said printing plate carrier comprises a network-like fabric structure which forms said surface, said fabric structure being coated throughout with a light sensitive material, said method comprising applying said copying mask to said fabric structure and exposing said light-sensitive coating through said mask by means of a copying lamp.

Claim 12 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a positive mask, said copying mask covering said non-image points.

Claim 13 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a negative mask, said copying mask covering said image points.

Claim 14 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 9 wherein said mask is a screen-printing mask, said screen-printing screen being produced by electroplating.

Claim 15 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 14 wherein said printing plate carrier has a metallic surface, said method comprising

applying said screen-printing mask to the surface of said printing plate carrier, said mask serving as a positive mask which insulates said surface covers said image points, and

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exposing the non-insulated parts of said surface to an electrolyte, thereby depositing metal where said material is not applied to form said screen printing screen.

Claim 16 (cancelled).

Claim 17 (previously presented): A method as in claim 1 wherein said thermal transfer material is a polymer material.